

Abraham Lincoln papers

From James F. Jaquess to James A. Garfield 1, May 19, 1863

1 At the time this letter was written, Garfield was a brigadier general of volunteers and the chief of staff for William S. Rosecrans. The following was enclosed in James R. Gilmore to Lincoln, May 27, 1863.

Head Quarters 73d Regt— III Inf

Camp Near Murfreesboro May 19th 1863

General

I feel it to be my duty to lay before you the following <u>considerations</u>, <u>facts</u> and and <u>proposition</u>.

Situated as we are, it ceases to be matter of astonishment, that we see the great eye of the world so intently fixed upon us. The truth is we are intrusted with the dearest interests of humanity; with the solution of the grandest problem that ever engaged the attention, or figured in the dreams of philosophers; it is the problem of mans capacity for self government. And if we fail in this enterprize, which we do most signally if we fail to suppress this rebellion, mans emancipation from tyrany and oppression is a failure, and human liberty and self government are fables—

The <u>question</u> that heaven has called us to discuss, not without blood, with the weapons of war, and demonstrate upon the battle field amid scenes of great slaughter, is not one of a political character alone— It is not simply a question of latitude and longitude—

But we are to settle the question, at once and forever as to whither we are a christian or a heathen nation—

We <u>claim</u> to be christian, on both sides of, "Mason and Dickson's Line",. We speak the same language, read the same Bible, and worship God under the same forms and ciremonies. We appoint our days of fasting & prayer — and observe them with a promptness and zeal characteristic of the most worthy. And independent of mans designs, these appointments and obsirvances have some times fallen on the same day north and south: with a determination to trust Providence, and at the same time to "keep our powder dry" — we have risen up from our devotions, grasped a fresh the well tried weapons of death, and rushed into the thickest of the fight, without stopping to reflect that God has other means of subduing his enemies — auxialliary to these—



It is a well known fact that the Methodist Episcopal Church, in the United States, was divided on the very questions which have divided the nation; before the southern states seceded. It is also known that the "Methodist Episcopal Church South", was a leading element in the rebellion of the southern states, and has been a prominent power in the prosecution of the war.

A considerable part of the territory occupied by the M. E. Church South, at the time of the separation, and up to recent date, is now in the possession of our (the Union) army— This brings a large number of ministers & people of that communion within our lines. Some of these were prominent in the rebellion that separated the church, and were most bitter and uncompromising on the questions of difference—

From these, I have learned, in person, the following facts: that they consider the rebellion has killed the M. E. Church South; that it has virtually obliterated slavery, and all the prominent questions of differ between the north and the south; that they are desirous of returning to the "old church" ("Methodist Episcopal"); that their brethren of the south are most heartily tired of the rebellion; and that they most ardently desire peace, and the privilege of returning to their allegiance to church and state— And that they will do this on the first offer, coming from a reliable source—

My attention has been called to these facts, and others of a like character — frequently of late, and from these considerations, but not from these alone, but because God has laid the duty upon me, I submit to the proper authorities, the following proposition viz—

I will go into the Southern Confederacy & return within Ninety Days with terms of piece that the Government will accept—

N. B. I propose <u>no compromise</u> with traitors — but their immediate return to allegiance to God and their Country— It is no part of my business to discuss the probability, or the possibility of the accomplishment of this work. I propose to do it, in the name of the Lord: If He puts it into the hearts of my superiors, to allow me to do it, I shall be thankful, if not I have discharged my duty.²

2 General Rosecrans concluded that Jaquess' proposal should be brought to Lincoln's attention, so he telegraphed the president on May 21 and inquired whether Lincoln wished to meet with Jaquess. Lincoln determined it would be best if Jaquess did not come to Washington. Instead, Jaquess outlined his proposal in a letter to Lincoln that was carried to Washington by James R. Gilmore. See William S. Rosecrans to Lincoln, May 21, 1863 (two same date); Jaquess to Lincoln, May 23, 1863; James R. Gilmore to Lincoln, May 27, 1863; Lincoln to Rosecrans, May 28, 1863; and *Collected Works*, VI, 225.



Your Obt Servt
James F. Jaquess D. D.
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